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PREACHED BEFORE THE
HONOURABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,
ON FRIDAY, FEB. 4. 1780.

B E I N G

The Day appointed by HIS MAJESTY'S PROCLAMATION, to be
observed as a Day of FASTING and HUMILIATION.

By GEORGE HORNE, D.D.
PRESIDENT OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD,
AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

O X F O R D:

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M D C C L X X X.

Lunæ 7^o. die Februarii, 1780.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Doctor HORNE, President of Magdalen College, in the University of Oxford, for the Sermon by him preached upon Friday last, before this House, at Saint Margaret's, Westminster; and that he be desired to print the same; and that the Lord LEWISHAM and the Lord NORTH do acquaint him therewith.

J. HATSELL,

Cl. Dom. Com.

DEUT. XXIII. 9.

WHEN THE HOST GOETH FORTH AGAINST
THINE ENEMIES, THEN KEEP THEE FROM
EVERY WICKED THING.

AS a minister of that Gospel which was first published by the Prince of Peace, who came to reconcile all things in heaven and earth, and bequeathed peace, as his last and best legacy, to his disciples, I could rather have wished, it might have been my province to congratulate you this day on the approach of it's re-establishment in the world; on the delightful prospect of times, when the whole earth should once more sit quiet, and be at leisure to attend to better things, than ingenious and well concerted plans of mutual destruction; when "nation
" should not lift up sword against nation, neither
" should they learn war any more." These ought to

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be the effects of Religion; these would be its effects, were it universally understood and practised; these will be its effects, at a more auspicious æra of the christian church, and in a happier clime, as all the prophets have foretold, which have been since the world began.

LET none, mean while, be offended and stumble at that stumbling stone laid in their way by the frequency of wars among nations professing Christianity. They owe not their origin to Religion, but to the want of it. The fault is in the ground, not in the seed, which is good, but is either stollen away, or withered, or choked by the passions growing up with it, and sometimes, even making it the cause, the very innocent cause, of those dissentions and animosities, which it was designed for ever to extirpate. “Whence
“come wars and fightings among you? Come they
“not hence, even of your desires,” which your Religion should mortify and subdue? Doubtless, the sight of *Christian, Catholic, Faithful, and Apostolic* princes, sending their numerous regiments to slaughter one another in the field of battle, forms a shocking contrast to the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus — so shocking, that some have been thereby induced

induced to maintain the utter unlawfulness of all war. But what then is to be done? Who can prevent a restless and ambitious state from attacking its neighbour? In these circumstances, such men must either defend themselves, or be defended by others, or God must interpose miraculously in their defence, or all must quietly submit to conquest and captivity by an unjust invader. Had this last been intended, that rigid moralist, the Baptist, would not have regulated, but prohibited the military profession; nor would Christians have served, as we know they did, with fidelity and diligence, in the armies of the Pagan emperors.

THE lawfulness of a war must therefore be rested now, under the Gospel, upon the same foot on which it hath ever stood from the beginning, namely, the justice of it; and upon a supposition that our cause is good — as we humbly trust it is — we may undoubtedly accept the permission, or rather commission, implied in the first words of the text; “When the host goeth forth against thine enemies” — The people of God may still be brought under a necessity of engaging in war, defensive or offensive, to maintain their rights, or to avenge their wrongs; and that, whether

whether against foreign enemies, or rebellious subjects : much more, if the latter, after having erected the standard of independency, should unite with the former, and exclaim concerning those who nourished and brought them up, like the children of Lot, when Affur had acceded to the League — “ Come, and let us root
 “ also them out, that they may be no more a people ;
 “ and that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance ! ” In circumstances like these, I say, when all is at stake, the people of God may carry on a war, as the only means left them to obtain an honourable and permanent peace, which, in many cases, can only be the fruit of victory ; and heroes might again be celebrated by an Apostle (should such heroes arise, with an Apostle to celebrate them) who, through faith, had “ subdued kingdoms,” as well as “ wrought
 “ righteousness.”

BETWEEN these two achievements, seemingly so very different (and often, alas, really so !) the latter part of the text points out a nearer connexion, than might, perhaps, have been imagined ever to subsist.
 “ When the host goeth forth against thine enemies,
 “ then keep thee from every wicked thing.” If, even with right on thy side, thou wouldest conquer and
 triumph,

triumph, remember to prepare the way by repentance and reformation. If thou desirest to become *great*, let ambition first excite thee to be *good*. The qualities are associated in the style imperial of heaven — “the Lord of Hosts — the HOLY One of Israel.” The characters therefore of the Warrior and the Christian are not incompatible. The first convert to the Gospel from among the nations was a military man; Cornelius the centurion. That profession may unite with the clerical, in the common cause; and the General may still go forth, as of old, with the Prophet by his side. While the hands of Joshua are extended in the field, those of Moses may be elevated in prayer; and the ministers of Religion may animate the people to overcome the adversary without them, by opposing and vanquishing, as a preliminary step, the enemy within them, the most dangerous enemy both to individuals and communities.

WHAT God has thus joined together it is the error of the times to put asunder; to think only of our fleets and armies, and to forget our faith and practice. There are few to whom it occurs, that the latter can have any influence on the success of the

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former. Fleets and armies must undoubtedly go forth ; they must have pay ; they must have provision ; they must have arms ; they must have skilful leaders : but when all the arrangements are made, if God go not forth with them, vain is the help of man ! “ The horse is prepared ” — he ought to be prepared — “ against the day of battle ; but salvation “ is of the Lord.” This idea, which never should be absent from our minds, and the correspondent affection which it is calculated to awaken in them, are expressed, in one of the prayers used upon these occasions, with a propriety, dignity, and pathos, which nothing can exceed — nothing can withstand. “ O “ Lord God of our salvation, in whose hands are the “ issues of life and death, of good and evil, and “ without whose aid the wisest counsels of frail man, “ and the multitude of an host, and all the instruments of war, are but weak and vain ; incline “ thine ear, we pray thee, to the earnest and devout “ supplications of thy servants ; who, not confiding “ in the splendor of any thing that is great, or the “ stability of any thing that is strong here below, do “ most humbly flee, O Lord, unto thee for succour, “ and put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” These have been the sentiments of Britons from age to

to age ; and let them continue to be so, till time and the world shall finish their course together. In uttering them, we speak the words not of superstition, bigotry, or enthusiasm, but of truth and soberness, if there be a God who governs the world ; and if there be not, why do we fast and pray ? — “ Let us eat “ and drink, for to-morrow we die ; ” we perish for ever, and become as if we had never been born. The doctrine of Epicurus is embraced, for the sake of the inference drawn from it. But we have been better instructed ; and therefore let the Soldier, as well as the Christian, put on his armour with prayer and supplication. If, on the contrary, “ when the host “ goeth forth,” it should carry prodigality, vice, and profaneness, with it, abroad, and they who send it forth should practise the same at home, what hope could remain ? “ Wouldest not thou, O our God, “ be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so “ that there should be no remnant, nor escaping.”

FOR let us reflect, what an aggravation it must needs be of national wickedness in the sight of God, if it should be suffered to increase, or even to continue the same, at such a season as this.

WAR,

WAR, in it's own nature, is a species of justice, of corrective justice. It is intended to be such, by those who enter into it, as deeming themselves to have been aggrieved, and finding no other method of obtaining redress. But — Thou that undertakest to correct offences in others, dost thou abandon thyself to the like? Thou that goest about to chastise thy fellow subject for rebellion against his earthly sovereign, art thou a rebel against the King eternal, immortal, invisible? This would be really casting out evil spirits through their prince. The man must be hardened indeed, who feels no compunction, when punishing his brother for crimes, which he allows in himself. Sin, at any time, is sin; but when we are inflicting vengeance upon it in others — as the Apostle most emphatically expresses himself, “it becomes *“exceeding sinful.”*”

IF we consider war, as it respects God, we may recollect, that peace is ever classed among the choicest of those blessings, which he bestows upon a favoured people; whose felicity in the enjoyment of it is beautifully represented by the circumstance of converting their military weapons into implements of agriculture; “beating

“beating their swords into plowshares, and their
 “spears into pruning hooks.” What idea then are
 we taught to conceive of war? Language sinks under
 the prophetic writers, and creation seems unable to
 supply them with an adequate image, when they at-
 tempt to describe its horrors. It is compared to a
 “threshing instrument of iron:” it is styled, “the
 “rod of God’s wrath; the hammer which breaketh
 “the whole earth in pieces:” it is said to be a “dash-
 “ing two kingdoms together, like potters vessels,”
 to the destruction of one — perhaps, of both. Am-
 bition, interest, or a love of novelty, may, for a while,
 regard it as sport; but most assuredly, if it last long,
 it will be found a very serious matter; sweet, per-
 haps, in the mouth; but afterwards, bitterness itself.
 Its effects may not be thought of at the time, while
 the wound is warm; but when it comes to grow cold,
 and fester, and perhaps is turning to a gangrene, they
 will be felt, and mourned, for ages and generations.
 Smarting under this fearful rod of the divine displea-
 sure — so fearful, that a king of Israel preferred pes-
 tilence before it — dare we go on to violate the divine
 laws, in despite of grace, in defiance of power?
 “Do we provoke God to anger? Are we stronger
 C “than

“than he?” Now, at least, let us forbear to add sin to sin.

AND that more especially, because it is sin which delivers this rod into the chastening hand of the Almighty. It is for the transgressions of a people, that God suffers these divisions of Reuben to arise within, and stirs up the spirit of princes to take peace from the earth without; that commercial states are shorn by him of their accumulated wealth, (to use the energetic language of Isaiah) “with an hired razor;” that he wastes their strong men, and causes the loud lamentations of the widow and the fatherless to be heard in all their borders; that he commissions war to march through a land, with terror and amazement in the van; famine, disease, and desolation, in the rear. If, then, sin be the surfeit, and war the disease occasioned by it, instead of entering upon a salutary regimen, for the recovery of national health, shall we continue “daily to drink iniquity, like “water?” — God forbid!

THERE is yet another argument, which may come home to the bosoms of many who hear me. In the host, when it goeth forth, you have, perhaps, a relation

lation — a near one — a father — a brother — a son — a friend, dear as life itself — for whose safe return you are bound by the tenderest ties to wish, and in expectation of the event, between hope and fear, pass many an anxious and sorrowful hour. That event will turn upon the favour of heaven, which may depend in part, at least, upon your faith and obedience. The blessing may be denied you, because you deserve not that it should be granted. For relations and friends in such a situation, you probably sometimes become an humble advocate in the closet, and lift up your hands to God above, in a prayer of intercession ; and we know that “ the effectual fervent prayer availeth much.” But in order to its success, the hands so lifted up must be “ pure hands ;” the prayer must be that “ of a righteous person.” For this reason, if for no other — for your brethren and companions’ sake — for the sake of your country, which involves in it all other relations and connections, be persuaded, that virtue and piety make the patriot ; and therefore, “ when the host goeth forth against thine enemies, “ then keep thee from every wicked thing.”

THESE observations may suffice to illustrate and confirm the doctrine of the text, that a time of war
should

should be a time of reformation. But it may be asked, what is to be the nature of this reformation, and wherein is it to consist? An answer may be returned to this question in the concluding words of the text; “Keep thee from *every* wicked thing;” forsake all evil, and be upon your guard against the return of it; but as some sins, like some diseases, are more prevalent and contagious at certain times, and in certain places, than others, mark well the abominations which discriminate and disgrace the age and the country in which you live, and be more especially upon your guard against *them*.

“JEHOVAH,” saith the divine Psalmist, “looketh
 “from heaven, he beholdeth all the sons of men;
 “from the place of his habitation he looketh upon
 “all the inhabitants of the earth; and considereth
 “all their works.” He looketh, then, on all the
 inhabitants of THIS land; he considereth all THEIR
 works. And when thus he looketh, what doth he
 behold? —

He beholdeth a great people, much degenerated,
 and daily more and more degenerating, from that
 noble simplicity, and manly integrity, which charac-
 terised

terised the manners of their venerable ancestors ; depraving their minds by the adoption of bad principles, enfeebling their bodies by vice and effeminacy, squandering their fortunes at the gaming table, and then, by an act of violence, in the rage and fury of despair, rushing forth to meet their judge.

HE beholdeth that virtue, which constitutes the excellency and dignity of the other sex, which is to it protection and ornament, a robe and a diadem, in danger of being totally laid aside, while the courts are crowded with trials for conjugal infidelity.

HE beholdeth an enormous and senseless luxury, still increasing with the distresses of the times, accompanied by a dissipation, depriving it's votaries of attention to all that is wise, and great, and good.

HE beholdeth his ordinances neglected ; his sabbaths profaned ; his sacraments disparaged ; his temples forsaken ; his ministers despised ; his religion torn in pieces by contending sects, while there seems to be scarcely enough of it, for each of them to take a little ; the infidel openly reviling, or covertly mocking ; the faith once delivered to the saints deserted

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for the dregs of Socinianism ; a set of men, styling themselves *philosophers*, wantoning in all the paradoxical absurdities of scepticism, leaving us, between them, neither matter nor spirit, neither body nor soul, and doing their best endeavours, in their lives and after their deaths, to render us a nation literally “ without God in the world.”

I would not designedly aggravate — and I esteem it my bounden duty on this day not to extenuate — I fear you acknowledge the leading features of the times to be drawn from life.

— AND is it matter of wonder — is it matter of offence, that a day should be appointed by royal proclamation, “ for a general FAST and humiliation
“ before Almighty God, to be observed in most devout and solemn manner, by sending up our prayers
“ and supplications to the divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon for our sins, and for averting those
“ heavy judgements which our manifold provocations
“ have so justly deserved ?” Is it matter of wonder, that we should be punished by the revolt of our provinces ? That we should meet with so many crosses, and find so many difficulties, in reducing them ?
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That well appointed armies under able generals, should, for so long a time together, have done nothing, or worse than nothing? That the common enemies should seize the opportunity? That their fleets should overspread the ocean, and appear upon our coasts, with the vauntings of Egypt — “ I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ? ” That we should be left alone in the contest, while the nations around us stand still in silent amazement, waiting the event? Waste not the time in fruitless complaints of this misfortune, or that accident; this minister, or that commander; but lay the blame where it is due, upon national wickedness, which has called down national calamities.

— BUT we are still preserved; and preserved, we trust, for a happy deliverance, at last, out of all our troubles. At the critical moment of our humiliation, when the conviction was rendered complete, that “ we could not trust in our bow, it was not our sword that could help us,” the destroying angel went forth, and swept away the flower and strength of the adverse navy by sickness. The insolence of the enemy in another quarter has been since repressed by the cool and determined valour of our countrymen.

men. The storm, that seemed to be gathered, and ready to burst forth, in a neighbouring kingdom, is past over, and gone; the time of rejoicing is there come, and the cheerful voices of gratitude and industry resound on every side. Nor doubt we, but that the little temporary uneasinesses and disquietudes here, those clouds in our English atmosphere, will, e'er long, by the same prudential and salutary counsels, be dispersed, and serenity and tranquillity restored among us.

LET the prodigal then return unto his heavenly Father, and he will receive him. Let us take with us words, and turn to the Lord our God. Let us confess his power, adore his goodness, and intreat his mercy: let us revere his word, observe his sabbaths, attend his ordinances, and partake his sacraments: let our faith be blameless, and produce it's proper fruits, righteousness and holiness, temperance and purity, patience and resignation, self knowledge and self government: let wisdom and seriousness once more be the glory of Englishmen, and folly and vanity fly away — to the place from whence they came.

— ONE thing is yet behind — and O that my voice could reach the remotest corners of the land, to
proclaim

proclaim to all it's inhabitants the wishes of Britain, that her children would dwell together in unity ; that they would not employ their shining talents, and extensive attainments, merely in thwarting each other ; that they would not revive old jealousies and animosities, or sow new ones ; that they would abolish enmity, and strain every nerve in the prosecution of this only contention — who shall stand first, and do most service, in the cause of their King, and their Country.

SUCH is the nature of the reformation to be desired. Blessed are the eyes that shall see it ; but still more blessed the hands that shall have contributed to effect it ! Viewed in the aggregate, it may seem difficult — it may seem impossible. But let us divide the task among us, and it will become easy. Let each of us undertake for ONE, and let us begin TO DAY. “ Then
 “ will the Lord be gracious to his inheritance, as in
 “ the ancient days, in the generations of old ; the
 “ Lord will make our way prosperous, and we shall
 “ have good success ;” we have had some — we shall have more — “ the Lord will give STRENGTH unto
 “ his people ; the Lord will give his people the
 “ blessing of PEACE.”

